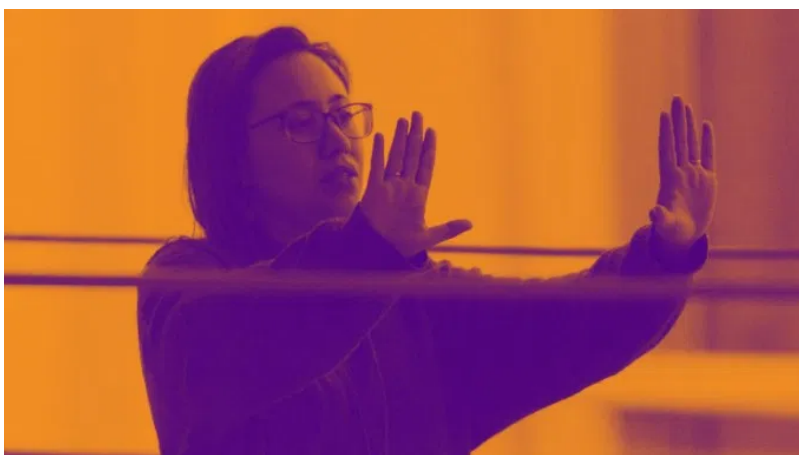


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Interview: Director Nour Wazzi

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*** Award-winning Nour Wazzi talks to We Are Cult about sci-fi thriller 'Baby Mine'.**

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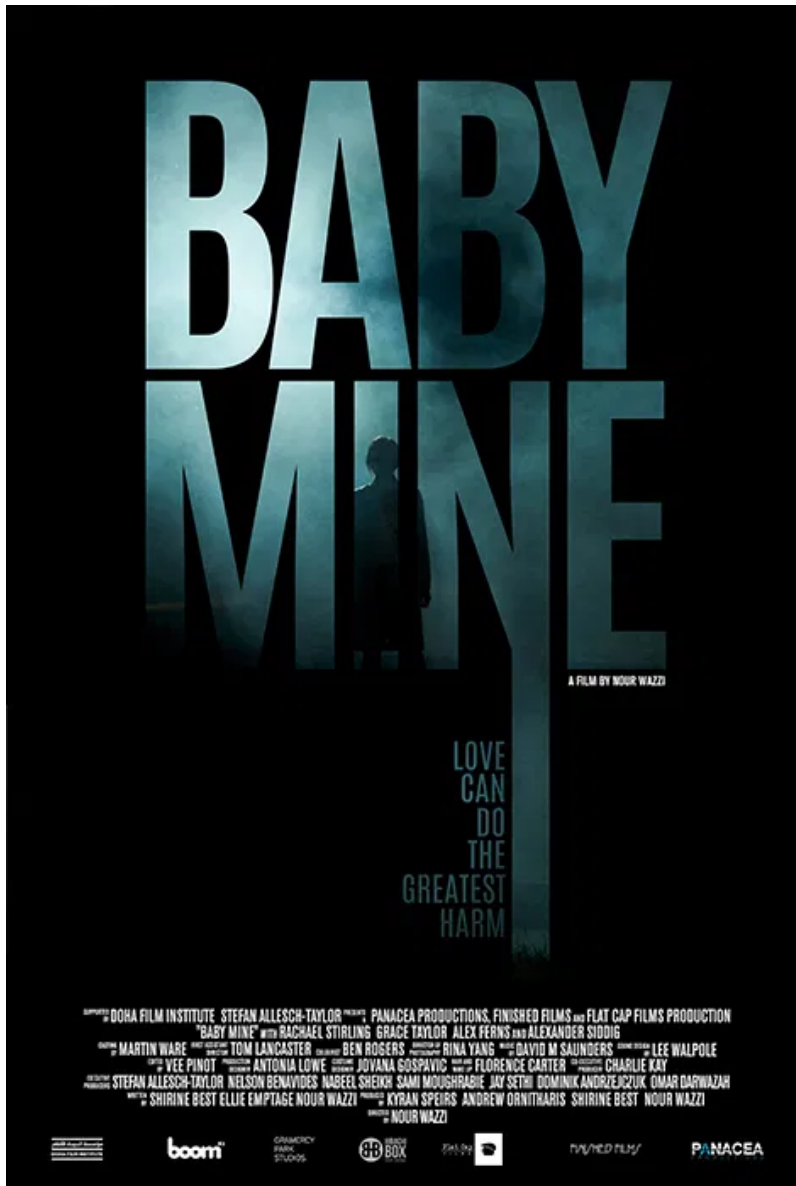
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Baby mine poster © Panacea Productions.

Nour Wazzi, a Lebanese born director, is talking about *Baby Mine*, her piercing depiction of marital discord. Over the course of twenty tight minutes, the film displays the chaos, conflict and candor of two disparate, despondent voices. We open on Sarah (Rachael Stirling), the archetypal white British mother and her disenfranchised, Middle Eastern husband (Alexander Siddig). Between them, their daughter Etti (Grace Taylor) sits, capturing the silent, stoic characteristics of a child caught between two discrete cultures.

Tweets by @wearecultonli

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Tomorrow, award-winning director Nour Wazzi talks to We Are Cult's @EoghanLyng about sci-fi thriller 'Baby Mine' starring #RachelStirling and #AlexanderSiddig - recently released worldwide on 19 June on @omeletocom via @PanaceaProds

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Nour directing actress Grace Taylor. Photo © Darren Brade.

“I never underestimate child actors,” Wazzi continues. “A lot of them are remarkably talented, not that Grace was easy to find. It was hard to find the right child who could represent both parents and had the emotional depth and nuance I was after. We cast Rachael very late in the day, as it’s very hard to cast known actors with busying clashing schedules, but it all worked out in the end. The main actor I was keen to cast was the hugely talented Alexander Siddig, from *Game of Thrones* and *The Spy*, as the father. I collaborated with two Arab actresses on my 2010 short *Habbiti* [Hiam Abbass and Yasmine Al Massari], who in turn worked with him on *Miral*. One of them introduced me to him, and to my luck he just loved the script.”

To this viewer’s eyes, *Baby Mine* is the most exciting British short film since 2019’s *Detainment*. Wazzi, much like Vincent Lambe, plunges at viewers from the beginning, and though her script is nowhere near as contentious as Lambe’s real life story, Wazzi opens her viewers up to their uncomfortable polemical beliefs, leanings and truths.



'Baby Mine'. Still photography © Panacea Productions.

“As I’ve honed my unique voice, David Fincher’s work has been a huge influence on my visual style. I’ve always preferred thrillers to horror. Horrors, you know what’s coming next and are designed for the shock factor. Thrillers, you don’t-and for me, that uncertainty carries more edge-of-seat suspense, room to ask questions and explore deeper meaning. There’s only been a few ‘elevated’ horrors recently, like *Hereditary* and *Get Out*, which have excited me due to the substance behind them. It’s actually quite lucky *Baby Mine* has come out in this climate, because confronting unconscious bias is now ever trendy and topical.”



Nour Wazzi directing. Photo © Darren Brade.

Before anyone in the comments section accuses either Wazzi or me of a “woke” agenda, cast your mind back to the 2016 OSCARS and tell me how many non-Caucasian actors won that night? Not a single one. Mercifully, things have improved since

then, and now we can celebrate *Black Panther* as a bastion of Black film-making; cherish Mahershala Ali for both his astonishing commitment to art and Islam; before exciting ourselves with the prospect of a third Oscar winner-this time played by Egyptian actor Rami Malek- countering Daniel Craig's James Bond.



'Baby Mine'. Still photography © Panacea Productions.

“My work isn't exclusively about Britain” Wazzi says. “I'm all about telling stories that can resonate internationally. I'm a Lebanese woman who's grown up in the West, and I'm married to a black man. My stories reflect my unique perspective of the world and it's always been important to me that my team- in front of and behind the screen- is balanced when it comes to women and people of colour. It's great to see that the industry is finally waking up to that!”

Baby Mine isn't entirely polemical. Instead, the cold toned textures adds to the dizzying, dark escapade in many of the film's set pieces. Much like Fincher's celebrated *Gone Girl*, perceptions, perspectives and poses change in the matter of seconds. Wazzi, detailed in her work and interview, is set for bigger things.



“It’s taken fifteen years, but I’m finally on the cusp of my big break”, she says triumphantly. “It’s every director’s dream to watch their work on the big screen, but I’m trying to re-think the importance of the cinematic experience . Everyone’s watching on VOD or online these days. It’s a tough one but my ultimate goal is blockbusters and sci-fi epics, so until I get there I’ll ultimately do what’s best for my movies. I’ve been really fortunate to have been able to make *Baby Mine* and my latest sci-fi thriller *Lab Rat*-airing on Dust on 9th July- as it finally gave me the chance to show off my genre capabilities and has led me to getting my high-end TV break directing on an exciting sci-fi show that’ll be announced soon,as well as getting in the room with some big players I’m keen to work with such as Legendary and Bad Robot. My hope when I make it is to elevate the next generation of Black and POC talent through my films and TV shows. We are out there and we are more than capable- we just need champions to give us that opportunity to shine. That time is now.”

**** ‘Baby Mine’ was released worldwide on 19 June on Omeleto. Nour Wazzi’s sci-fi short ‘Lab Rat’ receives its global release on the streaming platform Dust on Thursday 9 July. Social: @PanaceaProds***

**** A regular contributor to We Are Cult, Eoghan Lyng’s writing has also appeared in New Sounds, Record Collector, CultureSonar, Punk Noir Magazine, DMovies, Phacemag and other titles. Follow him on Twitter. Visit his homepage.***

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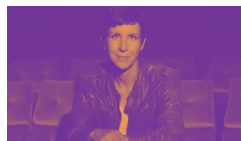
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BABY MINE TRAILER

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“I wanted to make a film with a Middle Eastern lead,” writer/director Nour Wazzi begins. “At the time of making my thriller, I found Middle Eastern characters tended to be portrayed in, let’s say, questionable ways, and I wanted to find a way to subvert and confront those stereotypes in an engaging, suspenseful and accessible framework that resonates on an emotional level. I’ve struggled to find public funding in the UK for my genre stories – which is why I’ve made a lot of dramas – but I ended up pooling together namely investors and an Arab fund [the Doha Film Institute] who were excited about my unique vision for the project.”

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